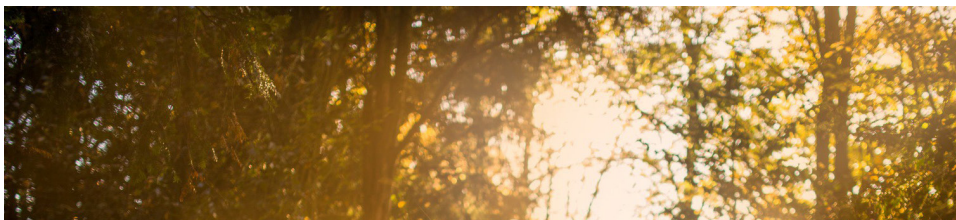


November 2023



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHAMPAIGN



## Coming Up

### Sunday, November 5

- 9 am All Saints Day (We will recognize those who have died this past year. Any saints who are not members of the church which should be celebrated can be added to the list. Please contact the church office with names.)

### Monday, November 6

- 7:30 pm Western Illinois University Choir Concert

### Sunday, November 12

- 3:30 pm Clarinet Concert by Gary Winder

### Tuesday, November 14

- 11:30 am Thanksgiving Dinner w/English Language Learners

### Sunday, December 3

- 3 pm Blue Christmas (An advent service for those experiencing grief or for whom this season is a time of grieving. It offers a space to express those feelings, but also to experience the hope we find in Christ.)

### Sunday, December 10

- 9 am Christmas Music Sunday with choir with instrumentalists

### Sunday, December 17

Caroling Party...more info to come

### Sunday, December 24

- 9 am Worship  
4 pm Family Christmas Eve Service  
8 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

## Celebrating the Lives of Saints November 5

BY JOE LUNDY

JOSEPH@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

The first Sunday in November is All Saints Day. This day is when we celebrate the lives of saints who no longer walk with us here on earth.

The communion on that Sunday has struck me as especially poignant, especially since I was taught about the way that our current taking of communion links us to all those who have taken communion in the past, alongside us but elsewhere in the world, and in the future. Communion always reminds me of the great host of saints that joins us as we go to the table. All Saints Day stands as a reminder that we are connected to all the people who share our faith, whether they are joining us in the here and now or in the hereafter. '

Be sure to contact the church office with any names of loved ones or friends who have passed away for the necrology (reading of the names of those who have passed away), especially if they weren't members of our congregation, as they may not be in our records.

Blessings,  
Joe Lundy

**2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY  
BRUNCH**  
**November 12<sup>th</sup>  
10:10 AM**

**Come, enjoy brunch  
Centennial Hall**

We will have a variety of  
brunch items. Enjoy the  
fellowship right after the 9  
AM service.

**Donations appreciated!**

Volunteers are needed to help  
with the brunches. If interested,  
please contact Jan Wittler, Gary  
Peterson or the church office.

Your Are Invited To

# THANKSGIVING *Dinner*

Join us for a chance to welcome newcomers and  
English language learners to our community and  
enjoy an early Thanksgiving meal.

TUESDAY  
14 NOVEMBER 2023  
AT 11:30 AM

First Presbyterian Church--Centennial Hall  
**Bring a favorite Thanksgiving dish to share**  
RSVP to [bonnie@firstpres.church](mailto:bonnie@firstpres.church)

## Thanks for the Hospitality!

A big thanks to the team that manages our hospitality table on Sundays. Under the leadership of Tom Gilmore we are also thankful for Camille James, Bill Marble, Blaise Pascal Zamena, Kathy and Mark Schoeffmann.

Please consider helping out. It is fun, it is easy, it takes little time and the rewards are great. You can sign up [here](#).

## Snippets from Your Pastor

BY MATT MATTHEWS  
MATT@FIRSTPRES.CHURCH

Friends: Fall is upon us and the temps remind us winter isn't far behind. I've noticed fewer reds in the leaves this year. I see mostly yellows and some oranges. Fall, unlike other seasons of the year, reminds me that time is fleeting. Fall brings a kind of urgency to me. (My sermon, below, was influenced mightily by this urgency.) I'd better get certain things done and done soon, or they may not get done at all. On the human front, I ask myself if any relationships need tending. I don't want to miss important connections. Fall reminds me that to wait might mean I miss today's opportunities, and to miss them would be too bad. What do I need to do now? Who do I need to call, before winter freezes my good intentions?

One of the things on my to-do list is to thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your financial giving. Thank you for your financial pledge for next year. Thank you for the gift of your heart and mind and service. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your attendance. Thank you for so much.

Last Sunday, you contributed candy, the trunks of your cars, and 90-minutes in a raw, steady drizzle for our Trunk or Treat. Monsters, mobsters, princesses, and Ghostbusters came looking for fun. You gave them smiles and two pieces of primo candy (check out our Facebook page for some pictures). No, not all of you were there, but

you gave the candy that we handed out, and I hope you offered up some prayers that added (and still add) grace to our efforts to love our community. You pay the bills to keep the heat on. One grandmother arrived early on the handicapped bus with her granddaughter. We weren't ready for them to visit the trunks yet because the rooster-riding cowgirls, the mad doctors, Mickey Mouse, and the super heroes and barber shop quartet were still setting up their trucks. So, this cold grandmother and her grand-daughter waiting inside the church--in the warm--until we had all the red carpets rolled out for them.

Who paid for the heat and the lights and the waxed floors? Thank you, thank you, thank you. And thanks be to God.

I'm reminded that Christmas is coming, but we don't get to Nativity without thanksgiving. We have so much for which to be grateful. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

We have some concerts coming up designed to welcome our community in. Please attend so that you can greet our neighbors. Bring some of your friends. Help us roll out more red carpets. Don't be shy. This matters. God wants us to love the world and our ministry of hospitality is one way we do it. Thank you for doing your part. Thank you for doing more than your part.

Thank you for making your lives matter.

Speaking of which, here's sermon for you!

PEACE,  
Matt 864.386.9138

## Lives That Matter

*Deuteronomy 34:1-12*  
(Sermon notes from the pulpit of First Presbyterian Church, Champaign, Illinois, 29 October 2023, Matt Matthews)

This is a sermon about making our lives matter.

Earlier this winter, I climbed the 178 steps up to the top of the lighthouse at Tybee Island. I was with our son Joseph, but he wasn't eager to trod up that claustrophobic, spiraling staircase to the top. I didn't mind a bit. My problem, as I've told you before, was stepping out onto the grated catwalk affixed to the outside of that lighthouse that ringed the top. The view was stunning, but looking down through that grate to the very, very distant ground terrified me.

Moses may have felt similarly on the top of Mount Nebo looking out at the promised land. In his case, the perspective not the height, might have been sobering. Having that kind of perspective can make you giddy.

God had taken him up. God showed him around—Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

This was the land God swore he would give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. God wanted Moses to see it. God wanted Moses to know a promise was being fulfilled. But Moses wouldn't go there. God would send Joshua, but not Moses.



This is where old Moses died.

We often get philosophical when we ponder the end of our lives. Standing on our Mount Nebo, we look at where our offspring are going, and we might be afraid for them. "I wish I could come along," we might say. "How will they make it without me?" Or, "I have so much I still want to do with this life," we might say. But life is ebbing away. We feel it in our bones. And we know, looking forward, we don't have as much life left as we'd like.

In the looking backwards, we might wonder if our lives were lived as fully as we could have lived them. Should I have been a teacher? I wish I'd spent more times with my kids and less time at the office. These are the sorts of things we notice when standing on life's Mount Nebos.

This is the sort of question Private Ryan asked.

You might remember that movie—*Saving Private Ryan*—where Captain John Miller (played by Tom Hanks) leads a detachment of men to find Private Ryan somewhere on the battlefield of the European campaign in WWII. All three of Ryan's brothers have been killed in action, and General George Marshall himself wants the surviving one, James Francis Ryan, to be found and sent home so that not all of the Ryan boys are lost in the war. Marshall wants something for that mother and father to have and to hold after the war. Captain Miller finds and retrieves Ryan, and sends him home, though not all in that detachment, including Miller, survive.

At the end of the film, the old man Ryan gathers with his family in the graveyard at Omaha Beach. He finds the gravestone of Captain Miller. He falls to his arthritic knees in tears. His wife and grown kids surround him. He looks into their eyes and asks them, "Was it worth it? Was my life worth it?" But this is not a question for him family to answer. It is a question that Ryan and God must figure out alone.

Those are the sorts of questions we ask about our lives when we stand on top of the Mount Nebos of our life. Did I use my gifts wisely? Was I worthy of God's grace shed for me? Was I generous with the gifts entrusted to my care? Was my life worth it?

\* \* \*

From our vantage way up here, we know every mortal's days are limited. For some of us, we have many years behind us but fewer years ahead. Perspective allows us to ponder these kinds of stark truths.

Perhaps it's here and now that we pause and say a prayer.

Lord, thank you for leading me safe this far. Through many dangers, toils, and snares you have been my guide, my harbor, my heart.

And, when it's my time, Redeemer God, thank you for walking right by my side and leading me step by step home.

In the meantime, Lord, help me to use my remaining energies in my life's remaining seasons well. By your grace, teach me to be generous with the gifts you've entrusted to my care.

Help me to waste nothing more of my remaining days. Help me to claim your calling on my life without fear, hesitation, or excuse. Light a fire in my life, O God. And when people look to me for hope, might they be encouraged. May they see in my life the clearest possible reflection of your holy light. Help me, holy God, to set the light that is my life not in the basement but on the lampstand. From on top of my Mount Nebo, perhaps the whole world can see your light, O God, reflected in my imperfect witness and my fractious patience and even my selfish love.

My prayer is that as we look backwards from Mount Nebo, we tell God thanks. And as we look forward, my prayer is we put that gratitude into tangible action.

Lord, Prepare me, to be a sanctuary/  
Pure and holy, tried and true/  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living/  
Sanctuary for you.

AMEN.

**Adopt a Highway**  
**Saturday, November 4,**  
**8:30 AM**  
**To sign up email colletta.**  
**ackermann@gmail.com**



**Thanks to everyone who came out to the 2023 Trunk or Treat despite the weather.**  
**Many thanks to Nicole Miller and family for organizing the event.**  
**Our members and friends are SPOOKTACULAR and very much appreciated!!!**





## The Heart of Mission

### ANGEL TREE/ADVENT OFFERING



NO ROOM  
IN THE INN?

The Angel Tree and the December Advent Offering will be combined this year. The monetary offerings will go toward the first month's housing for The Refugee Center's newest refugees. Should you want to give items there is a "ROOM IN THE INN" list of needed items and a box on the mission table to give your gifts.

## There Is Room In the Inn

Each time a refugee family arrives in Champaign/Urbana, the Refugee Center helps the family find housing and in collaboration with other agencies in C/U, helps furnish their new homes with basic needs. Since most families come with little or nothing, these "ROOM IN THE INN" items are especially helpful. Our church and other faith based organizations will be collecting these items and Grace Lutheran Church will store them so they can be distributed as needed.

Following are the items you can provide as a part of the Angel Tree project. We will have a collection box in Westminster Hall.

- Full sheet set
- Twin sheet set
- 1 tall trash can + one box of trash bags
- 4 Towel/washcloth sets
- 2 small waste baskets
- 1 set of pots and pans
- 1 12+ piece dinnerware set
- 1 kitchen utensil set
- 2 can openers
- 1 pack-n-play

## Knowing Cuba

Dance is important in Cuba. Watch a bit of [Cha Cha Cha](#) to brighten your day.



## Pride Fest a Success

BY BRANDI LOWE  
BRANDISCRAPBOOK@YAHOO.COM

On September 30, CPJMT (Compassion, Peace, and Justice Ministry Team) participated in the annual Pride Fest sponsored by Uniting Pride Center (UP Center). The Pride Fest is a fun, colorful, and safe space for the LGBTQIA+ community and those who support it to come together to celebrate the rich diversity of human beings in CU. CPJMT held a booth at the fair where we passed out water bottles with the church's information on them, pronoun stickers, and Pride flag stickers. There were many church members and community members who stopped by the booth to chat, take water or stickers, or just to say "hi." We also had 7 people marching in the parade, carrying a banner from the church. **Heather Lowe** and **Robert Ferrer** did a great job passing out candy to the colorfully clad spectators. Our matching First Pres T-shirts were the icing on the cake. Members **Brandi Lowe**, **Karin Vermillion**, and **Kate Cole**, as well as former choir member **Liz Martin** also sang with the Sing It Up Choir as part of the Pride Fest activities.

This event is important to our church because it establishes our congregation as a safe place for people in the LGBTQIA+ community to attend and not only be welcomed, but wanted. While many churches say they are welcoming, they don't support the lives of people in the LGBTQIA+ community. We do.

At the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly in St. Louis in June 2018, the Presbyterian

Church voted unanimously to pass three overtures:

- Overture 11-04, On Clarifying the Position of the PC(USA) Regarding Appropriate Boundaries of Religious Liberty: Acknowledges the misuse of the term "religious freedom" in denying basic human rights, and reaffirms that faith and religious liberty cannot be used to discriminate against anyone simply because of who they are.
- Overture 11-12, On Affirming and Celebrating the Full Dignity and Humanity of People of All Gender Identities: Acknowledges the church's past mistake in being unwelcoming to transgender and non-binary individuals, encourages the welcoming and acceptance of all gender identities, and affirms their right to live free from discrimination in any arena; this overture also specifically mentioned the rights of transgender students.
- Overture 11-13, On Celebrating the Gifts of People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities in the Life of the Church: Apologizes for the church's previous unwelcoming stance on LGBTQ parishioners, celebrates LGBTQ church pioneers, and states the church will welcome, lift up, and fight for the human rights of all people created in the eyes of God.

For more information on the PCUSA and sexuality and same-gender relationships: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/sexuality-and-same-gender-relationships/>

For more information on Uniting Pride in CU: <https://www.unitingpride.org/>



## Face to Face with Jack & Gwen Pollard



### What brought you to First Presbyterian Church?

I grew up Methodist and Jack was Presbyterian. When we came to Champaign, we first attended one and then the other.

### What has been the highlight of your church experience?

The weddings of two of our children here, the inspiring preaching over the years and the wonderful youth group our children experienced. Some of that group still get together.

### Tell me about your family? Your work?

We have two sons and two daughters, nine grandchildren and are about to be great-grandparents. Over the years Gwen helped raise fifty foster children. Jack kept busy with his practice of cardiology and administrative positions at Carle. He has still not completely retired, continuing to read electrocardiograms for Carle.

### What do you do in your free time?

Gwen is the athlete in the family with tennis and golf. She likes to read and

cook. Jack asked his son if he should consider assisted living and his son pointing to Gwen replied, "Dad you already have it." We both like to play bridge and spend wintertime in Florida.

### Who are your favorite Bible characters?

Jack: I will say Joseph of the Old Testament. He was cast out of his family and became an important leader in a foreign land. More importantly he was able to forgive the brothers who forsook him. Gwen: Mary. I can't think of anyone more important. She was a poor teenage girl who became the mother of Jesus.

### How can the church best be the church?

We agree here. Welcome all people and carefully consider others' ideas. Be open minded.



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God of all mercy,  
 we know that you love us even when we  
 are not sure that we love ourselves.  
 Embrace us when frustration and failure  
 leave us hollow and empty.  
 Forgive our sins, and grant us forgiving  
 hearts toward others.  
 Help us not to take any of your gifts for granted;  
 but make us truly grateful for all our many blessings.  
 In the confession of our lips, show us  
 now the promise of a  
 new day, the springtime of the forgiven;  
 through Jesus Christ, who is able to  
 make all things new. AMEN.

## Meditation in Limerick

BY JIM EVANS

NOVEMBER 27, 2018

### Finding Comfort

When I'm recalling, lamenting, and much too intent.  
 When regretting and fretting till my energy's spent.  
     I find comfort anew  
     From an accounting view  
 That all past costs are irrelevant.

(This principle from an MBA cost accounting course at the University of Chicago serves me in other spheres of life. It reminds me to look and move forward in making decisions.)

### Men's Prayer Group

The men of the church gather for prayer on Zoom Fridays at 8:15 AM. We pray for our world, our nation, our local communities and our congregation. We pray for those on our prayer list and for others who we know who are facing life's challenges and life's joys. We pray in turn in our own way and in the language of our choice and conclude with the Lord's Prayer. This is an open small group. Contact church office or Bob Kirby for Zoom link.

## *Joys & Concerns*

### We extend our sympathy to...

- the family and friends of **Chip Castello** who died October 6;
- the family and friends of **Margaret Parkinson** who died October 20;
- the family and friends of **Carol Karch** who died October 30. A Memorial Service will be held at the church on Saturday, November 4, at 11 AM.

### We give thanks for...

- the members and friends who braved the weather to host our Trunk or Treat on Sunday, October 29; you provided warmth and smiles on a dreary day!
- the response to the 2024 Stewardship Campaign.

# Finance

## Financial Update

BY ANN WEBBINK, FINANCE TEAM

ANWEB2@YAHOO.COM

### Contributions

Total September contributions: \$50.9K from plate and pledge plus \$9.3K from prepaid= \$60.2K. This is \$7.8 K less than last year and \$9.6K under budget. Total contributions YTD, including prorated prepaid pledges: \$614.5K which is \$40K less than last year and \$13.7K under budget.

At 75% of the year, we have 76.7% of the budgeted contributions, including all prepaid contributions.

### Expenses

September expenses were \$80.6 K, which is \$8 K more than last year and \$2.1K under budget. Expenses YTD were \$717.3k, which is \$48K less than last year and \$27K under budget. At 75% of the year, we have spent 75.6% of the budget.

### Balance YTD

Expenses exceeds revenue by \$13.9K, which is \$8.1K more than last year.

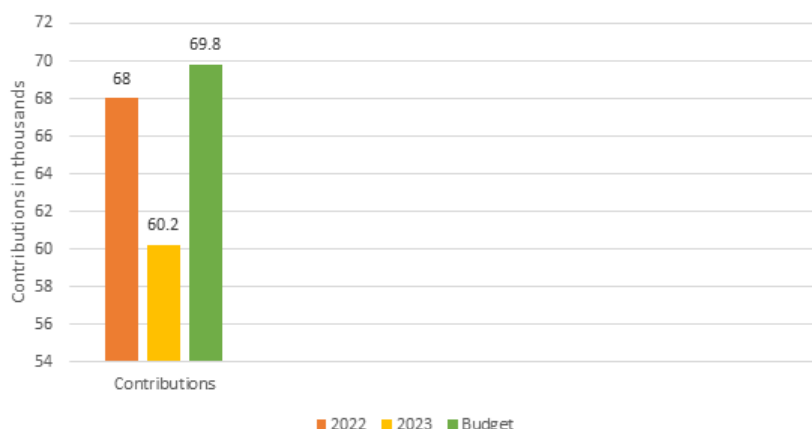
### Session Designated Funds

\$1,687,079 which is \$63,000 less than last month.

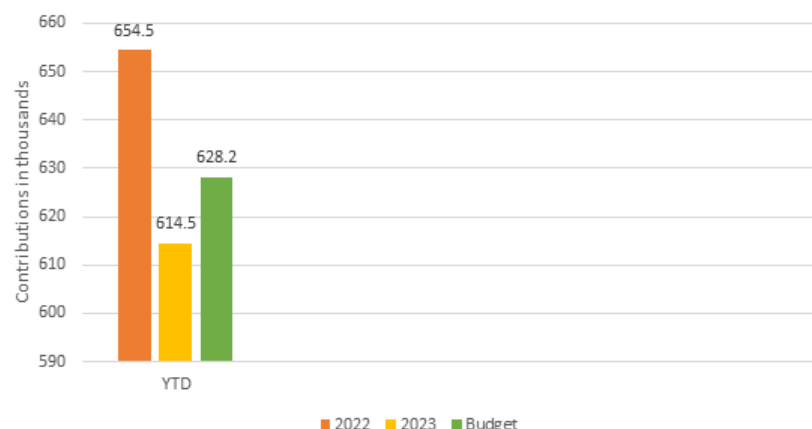
### Summary of Restricted Accounts

\$2411 was given to various funds this month

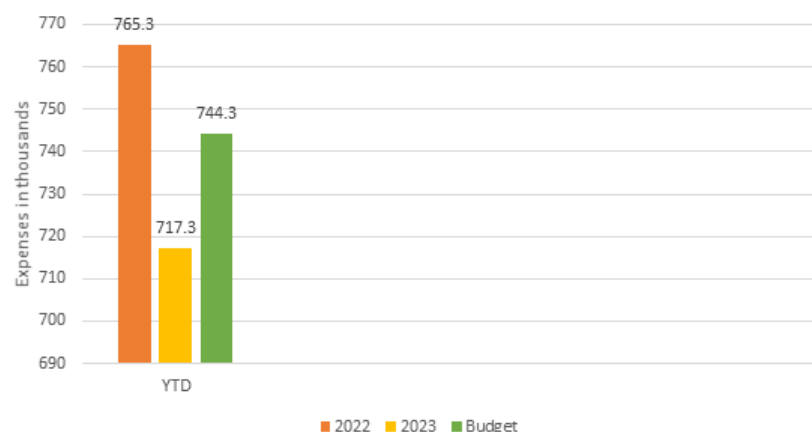
September Contributions



Contributions YTD



Expenses YTD







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CHURCH** OF CHAMPAIGN

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Champaign, IL 61820

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**F:** 217.356.7242

**E:** [info@firstpres.church](mailto:info@firstpres.church)

[www.firstpres.church](http://www.firstpres.church)

**Sunday:**

- 9 AM Worship
- 10 AM Coffee and Fellowship
- 10 AM Sunday School for Youth & Adults

Online Worship is also available at 9 AM on Sunday mornings thru YouTube, Facebook, and our church website. Go to FirstPres.Live

Contact the church office for more information.

**Pastor:**

Matt Matthews..... Senior Pastor/Head of Staff  
Joseph Lundy..... Associate Pastor for Discipleship

**Staff:**

Martice Chapple..... Facility Assistant  
Ritchie Drennen..... Facility Manager,  
Patty Farthing..... Office Assistant  
Robert Ferrer..... Audio-visual Technician  
Fred Foster..... Evening Custodian  
Marcia Franks..... Office Administrator  
Joe Grant..... Director of Music  
Rachel Matthews..... Covenant Pastor for Mission  
Ann Petry..... Accounting  
Sora Shepard..... Organist/Pianist  
Libby Sternhagen..... Bell Choir Director  
Bonnie Ward..... English Language Learner Director

Staff email addresses are the person's first name followed by  
@firstpres.church For example, matt@firstpres.church

The newsletter is published monthly.  
Deadline is the third Monday of the month for the following month's edition.  
Send submissions to [marcia@firstpres.church](mailto:marcia@firstpres.church).